

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
CORPUS CHRISTI DIVISION**

TONY HALL, Plaintiff, V. JESSE GARCIA, ET AL., Defendants.	§ § § § § § §	Case No. 2:12CV284
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**MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER DENYING MOTION
FOR APPOINTMENT OF COUNSEL**

Plaintiff is an inmate in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice - Institutional Division, currently assigned to the McConnell Unit in Beeville, Texas. Proceeding *pro se* and *in forma pauperis*, plaintiff filed a civil rights complaint pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983, alleging that defendants used excessive force against him and failed to protect him from harm (D.E. 1). Service of process was ordered on two defendants, and their answers are due in approximately 20 days. Pending is plaintiff's motion for appointment of counsel (D.E. 24).

In Bounds v. Smith, the Supreme Court held that a prisoner's constitutional right of access to the courts requires that the access be meaningful; that is, prison officials must provide pro se litigants with writing materials, access to the law library, or other forms of legal assistance. Bounds v. Smith, 430 U.S. 817, 829 (1977). There is, however, no constitutional right to appointment of counsel in civil rights cases. Akasike v. Fitzpatrick, 26 F.3d 510, 512 (5th Cir. 1994); Branch v. Cole, 686 F.2d 264, 266 (5th Cir. 1982). Further, Bounds did not create a "free-standing right to a law library or legal assistance." Lewis v. Casey, 116 S. Ct. 2174, 2180 (1996). It is within the Court's discretion to appoint

counsel, unless the case presents "exceptional circumstances," thus requiring the appointment. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(1); Cupit v. Jones, 835 F.2d 82, 86 (5th Cir. 1987).

A number of factors should be examined when determining whether to appoint counsel. Jackson v. Dallas Police Department, 811 F.2d 260, 261-62 (5th Cir. 1986) (citing Ulmer v. Chancellor, 691 F.2d 209 (5th Cir. 1982)). The first is the type and complexity of the case. Id. This case is not complex. According to plaintiff, defendants assisted each other in committing an unprovoked assault. Though serious, plaintiff's allegations are not complex.

The second and third factors are whether the plaintiff is in a position to adequately investigate and present his case. Id. Plaintiff's pleadings demonstrate he is reasonably articulate and intelligent. At this early stage of the case, plaintiff is in a position to adequately investigate and present his case, and to conduct discovery.

The fourth factor which should be examined is whether the evidence will consist in large part of conflicting testimony so as to require skill in the presentation of evidence and in cross-examination. Id. Examination of this factor is premature because the case has not yet been set for trial. Dispositive motions have not yet been filed.

Finally, there is no indication that appointed counsel would aid in the efficient and equitable disposition of the case. The Court has the authority to award attorney's fees to a prevailing plaintiff. 42 U.S.C. § 1988. Plaintiff is not prohibited from hiring an attorney on a contingent-fee arrangement. Plaintiff's motion for appointment of counsel (D.E. 24) is

denied without prejudice at this time. This order will be *sua sponte* reexamined as the case proceeds.

ORDERED this 18th day of December, 2012.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Janice Ellington", is written over a horizontal line.

B. JANICE ELLINGTON
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE